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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5835
INFO AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
USMISSION USVIENNA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA J5//
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY ANKARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 002488

DEPT FOR SA/PAB, S/CT, NEA, EUR/CEN; LONDON FOR POL/TUELLER; PARIS
FOR POL/RAVELING; ROME FOR POL/DEMPSEY; MBABANE FOR MALINOWSKI

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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN OFFICIAL CONFIRMS THAT MULLAH OMAR
ASKED BIN LADEN TO REFRAIN FROM "ANTI-SAUDI" ACTIVITIES

REFS: (A) FBIS LD2603173097 (B) ISLAMABAD 1750

11. (U) CLASSIFIED BY TOM PRICE, POLITICAL COUNSELOR. REASONS: 1.5 (C) (D).

12. (C) SUMMARY: MARCH 27 PAKISTANI PRESS REPORTS STATE THAT
MULLAH OMAR MET WITH FUGITIVE SAUDI FINANCIER BIN LADEN IN KANDAHAR
ON MARCH 25 AND TOLD HIM NOT TO USE "AFGHAN TERRITORY FOR ANTI-
SAUDI GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES." TAYYAB HUSSAINI, A GOOD CONTACT AT
THE AFGHAN EMBASSY HERE, CONFIRMED THESE REPORTS AND NOTED THAT
OMAR'S COMMENTS DID NOT REPRESENT A SHIFT IN TALIBAN POLICY TOWARD
BIN LADEN, BUT WERE A "WARNING." SAUDI EMBASSY POLOFF HAMZA GASSAS
TOLD POLOFF THAT OMAR'S COMMENTS COULD MEAN THAT THE TALIBAN ARE
BECOMING MORE CONCERNED ABOUT BIN LADEN'S ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY.

OMAR MEETS BIN LADEN
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13. (U) PAKISTANI NEWSPAPERS REPORTED ON MARCH 27 THAT MULLAH OMAR,
THE TALIBAN LEADER, MET WITH OSAMA BIN LADEN, EX-SAUDI FINANCIER
AND SUPPORTER OF RADICAL ISLAMIC CAUSES, IN KANDAHAR ON MARCH 25 TO
INFORM HIM OF "THE CONCERN OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT ABOUT HIS
ACTIVITIES" IN AFGHANISTAN. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLES, OMAR THEN
TOLD BIN LADEN THAT HE SHOULD NOT USE "AFGHAN TERRITORY FOR ANTI-
SAUDI GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES." HE ALSO REPORTEDLY TOLD BIN LADEN
THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT U.S. FORCES SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM
SAUDI ARABIA BECAUSE THEY ARE NO LONGER NEEDED THERE. ONE OF THE
ARTICLES GOES ON TO NOTE THAT THE TALIBAN DELEGATION TO THE MARCH
23 OIC SUMMIT IN ISLAMABAD HAD MET WITH THE SAUDI DELEGATION AND
BEEN INFORMED OF SAUDI CONCERNS ABOUT BIN LADEN.

EMBOFF SAYS TALIBAN HAVE NOT CHANGED POLICY ON BIN LADEN
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14. (C) ON MARCH 27, POLOFF MET WITH TAYYAB HUSSAINI, SECOND
SECRETARY AT THE TALIBAN-CONTROLLED AFGHAN EMBASSY HERE, AND ASKED
HIM TO COMMENT ON THE ARTICLES. HUSSAINI, WHO SAID HE HAD SPOKEN
TO TALIBAN OFFICIALS IN KANDAHAR EARLIER IN THE DAY, CONFIRMED THAT
THE ARTICLES ARE ACCURATE: "MULLAH OMAR SUMMONED BIN LADEN FROM
JALALABAD AND REQUESTED A MEETING WITH HIM IN KANDAHAR BECAUSE HE
IS CONCERNED THAT BIN LADEN IS BECOMING TOO AGGRESSIVE IN HIS
PUBLIC STATEMENTS." HUSSAINI DID NOT DIVULGE WHAT BIN LADEN HAD
SAID THAT HAD AROUSED TALIBAN CONCERN. (NOTE: BIN LADEN HAS GIVEN
A NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS IN RECENT WEEKS IN WHICH HE ATTACKED SAUDI

ARABIA AND THE U.S.) POLOFF ASKED HUSSAINI WHETHER THE TALIBAN DELEGATION HAD MET WITH SAUDI REPRESENTATIVES AT THE RECENT OIC SUMMIT. HUSSAINI REPLIED THAT MULLAH RABBANI, THE HEAD OF THE TALIBAN DELEGATION AND CHIEF OF THE "CARETAKER COUNCIL" IN KABUL, HAD MET WITH A SAUDI OFFICIAL NAMED "NAYIF," BUT DENIED THAT THE QUESTION OF BIN LADEN HAD BEEN RAISED. (NOTE: WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER HUSSAINI WAS REFERRING TO NAYIF SAUD, THE SAUDI MINISTER OF INTERIOR; WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM LOCALLY WHETHER NAYIF SAUD WAS A MEMBER THE SAUDI DELEGATION.)

15. (C) HUSSAINI ALSO TOLD US THAT NOT TOO MUCH SHOULD BE READ INTO OMAR'S REMARKS; "THIS DOES NOT REPRESENT ANY SHIFT IN POLICY BY THE TALIBAN. WE WILL CONTINUE TO OFFER HIM (BIN LADEN) SHELTER, BUT HE MUST ABIDE BY OUR RULES." (NOTE: THE TALIBAN HAVE TOLD EMBOFFS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT BIN LADEN CAN STAY IN AFGHANISTAN, BUT SHOULD NOT ENGAGE IN "TERRORIST ACTIVITIES" WHILE THERE.) HUSSAINI ADDED THAT BIN LADEN SHOULD CONSIDER OMAR'S COMMENTS A "WARNING."

MEETING WITH SAUDI DIPLOMAT
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16. (C) IN A MARCH 27 MEETING WITH POLOFF, HAMZA GASSAS, A POLITICAL OFFICER AT THE SAUDI ARABIAN EMBASSY, STATED THAT HE IS "UNSURE OF WHAT TO MAKE OF OMAR'S COMMENTS." SOME OF THE PRESS ARTICLES INDICATED THAT THE TALIBAN ARE BECOMING MORE CONCERNED ABOUT BIN LADEN, WHICH WOULD BE POSITIVE, HE CONTINUED. HOWEVER, OMAR'S COMMENTS THAT U.S. TROOPS SHOULD NOT BE STATIONED IN SAUDI ARABIA WERE OF CONCERN, HE RELATED. QUERIED WHETHER A TALIBAN DELEGATION HAD IN FACT MET WITH SAG REPRESENTATIVES ON THE MARGINS OF THE OIC SUMMIT, GASSAS RESPONDED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW, BUT DID NOT THINK THAT THEY HAD MET WITH CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH, WHO HEADED THE SAUDI DELEGATION. GASSAS SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER NAYIF SAUD WAS A MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION, AND CONCLUDED BY PROMISING TO LOOK INTO THE ISSUE FURTHER.

COMMENT
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17. (C) BASED ON HUSSAINI'S COMMENTS AND THE PRESS REPORTS, IT APPEARS THAT THE TALIBAN MAY BE WORRIED ABOUT BIN LADEN'S RECENT ACTIVITIES AND THE REACTION THEY ARE PROVOKING FROM THE SAUDIS AND/OR THE U.S. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, IT IS FAR FROM CERTAIN THAT THE TALIBAN ARE FEELING THE HEAT ON THIS ISSUE DIRECTLY FROM THE SAUDIS, AS SOME OF THE PRESS STORIES HERE SUGGEST. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROBE IN AN ATTEMPT TO LEARN WHO SAID WHAT TO WHOM ON THIS ISSUE.

SIMONS